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Transmitting the French Revolution: A Compulsive History

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Did material culture have a revolution? A host of innovative studies since the 1980s have answered defiantly in the affirmative. Within the framework of the ‘cultural turn’ a host of quotidian things have been identified as vital indices – or semaphores – of revolutionary politics. Objects participated in the project of regenerating mankind, as politics seeped into and transformed the incidentals of everyday life. Fans, buttons, playing cards, children’s toys, all were mobilised as tools of symbolic communication.¹ Within the home too, wallpaper, furniture and porcelain (the famous faïence de Nevers) emblazoned with revolutionary emblems performed and promoted civic virtue. This transformation of everyday objects into tools of republican pedagogy was made possible through the active participation of female citizens, undermining the assumption that the home lay outside of the public realm of politics.² In this dramatic widening of what constitutes a political text, historians have gained access to a vital and visceral dimension of revolutionary experience. They have corroborated the claims of the late Michel Vovelle that non-written sources could offer unique insight into revolutionary mentalities: “Dans cette recherche des confessions indirectes, des aperçus souvent inattendus, l’iconographie introduit à des découvertes qu’aucun discours n’autoriserait.”³

Within this flourishing current of scholarship, material culture has been conceived in two distinct ways. The first has emphasised the mobility of objects over the revolutionary era, their semantic instability and aleatory trajectories. As Erika Naginski argued in a classic article, processes of “propulsion, dispersion, reassembly” threw objects into motion after 1789.⁴ Her terms chime admirably with the drastic transfer of cultural property across the revolutionary decade, as the patrimony of the clergy, the nobility and the corporations were

¹ See the classic Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). For a stimulating discussion, and an excellent bibliography, see Natacha Coquery, Ian Collier, Richard Flamein, ‘Ce que les cultures matérielles peuvent apporter à l’historiographie de la Révolution française’, *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 386 (2016), 125–44.

² Leora Auslander, *Cultural Revolutions. Everyday Life and Politics in Britain, North America and France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 113–148; Ulrich Lehmann, ‘Material Culture and Materialism: The French Revolution and Wallpaper’ in Anne Gerritsen, Giorgio Riello (eds.) *Writing Material Culture History* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 173–190.

³ Michel Vovelle, ‘L’iconographie: une approche de la mentalité révolutionnaire’ in Stéphane Michaud, Jean-Yves Mollier, Nicole Savy (eds.), *Usages de l’image au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Editions Créaphis, 1992), 26.

⁴ Erika Naginski, ‘The Object of Contempt’, *Yale French Studies*, Fragments of Revolution, 101 (2001), 32–53.

subjected to confiscation, proscription or re-sale, marking a decisive episode in the genesis of the modern art market across Europe.⁵ Her dynamic framework also accords with the influential theoretical perspectives of anthropologists and philosophers such as Arjun Appadurai and Bruno Latour who have insisted on the discontinuous social life of things, the “circulations, runs, transfers, translations, displacements, crystallizations” through which objects construct their human subjects and enable the articulation of new types of identity.⁶ These displacements are particularly exciting when considering objects translated across oceans and borders, as Ashli White’s new work on the appropriation of French luxury goods by freed slaves in Haiti attests.⁷

The second approach has turned not on material goods so much as on materiality, that is, the physical environment within which revolutionaries worked and against which they had to strive.⁸ If the first approach conceives of objects caught in an accelerating rhythm of appropriation and exchange, the second approach thinks about the material constraints that frustrated or at least slowed the implementation of revolutionary will. In Rebecca Spang’s brilliant *Stuff and Money in the Time of the French Revolution*, understanding the labour required to incise new matrices helps account for the incriminating “lag” between the idea of revolutionary currency and its operation in practice.⁹ For Natasha Coquery, the theme of lag returns in the “paradox” of the persistence of luxury articles on the revolutionary market: despite their commitment to egalitarianism, the Jacobins dispersed so many high-status goods belonging to *émigrés* and traitors through auction that they actually boosted the allure of older hierarchies of consumption.¹⁰

Richard Taws has approached the topic from a different angle, showing how thinking through the materiality of image production holds clues for understanding how the revolutionaries conceived of duration. Obsessed with their posterity, the Jacobins, as Taws nonetheless underlines, struggled to create anything more than provisional memorials to their achievements, memorials whose ephemerality signified the precarity of the Revolution itself.¹¹ Such studies have pointed to a way beyond the impasse of the Bicentenary debates,

⁵ See Monica Preti-Hamard, Philippe Sénéchal (eds.), *Collections et marché de l’art en France 1789–1848* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes; Paris: Institut national d’histoire de l’art, 2005).

⁶ Bruno Latour ‘The Berlin Key or How to do Things with Words’ in Paul Graves-Brown (ed.), *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 10; see also Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁷ See her forthcoming book: *Revolutionary Things: Material Culture and Politics in the Late Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World*.

⁸ Alan Potofsky, *Constructing Paris in the Age of Revolution* (Basingstoke [England]; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁹ Rebecca Spang, *Stuff and Money in the Time of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015).

¹⁰ Natacha Coquery, ‘Luxury Goods beyond Boundaries: The Parisian Market during the Terror,’ in Jon Stobart, Johanna Ilmakunnas (eds.), *A Taste for Luxury in Early Modern Europe: Display, Acquisition and Boundaries* (London: New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 286.

¹¹ Richard Taws, *The Politics of the Provisional: Art and Ephemera in Revolutionary France* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press).

substituting the primacy of discourse with a renewed attention to tangible products and embodied practices as sites where the symbolic and the social realms intersect.

The question arises, though: what happened to this material universe after the revolutionary decade? Did objects too have their Thermidor? We still know comparatively little about the processes by which souvenirs from the revolutionary period were preserved into the nineteenth century. If the fundamental role of the Jacobin state in the construction of *le patrimoine* has been widely discussed, the parallel emergence of a constellation of private museums and family shrines awaits further analysis. In his classic study on revolutionary dress, Richard Wrigley provides evidence of garments kept as “relics” especially those associated with the royal martyrs or worn by *grands hommes*, but also personal reminders of past activism.¹² Whilst a great deal of ephemeral material simply degraded, some objects were targeted for deliberate iconoclasm. Largely ignored by comparison with Jacobin vandalism, the cleansing of public space of symbols from the revolutionary and Napoleonic period (such as eagles, bees and tricolour flags) between 1814–16 ironically demonstrated the enduring “sensibilité aux signes” within French political culture.¹³ As the cultural production of the revolutionary era was placed under taboo in the public realm, it was instead channelled during the Restoration into an underground of private commemoration. This underground proved essential in conserving the heritage of the Revolution during the majority of the nineteenth century, when – for reasons of political hostility or complacency – it essentially remained institutionally “homeless”.¹⁴

This is the important contribution that the study of collecting can make to analysing the French Revolution: it places emphasis squarely on the complex mechanisms of transmission, the channels and agents by which the physical traces of 1789 were passed down across the ensuing two hundred years.¹⁵ These chains of descent between family members, collectors and institutions formed the counterpart – and sometimes the stimulus – to the great ‘intertext’ of revolutionary historiography descending from Thiers, Michelet, Lamartine and Blanc, as well as the repertoire of more-or-less mythical episodes and narratives that populated genre paintings and popular illustrations from the July Monarchy onwards.¹⁶ As Jean-Clément Martin has argued in his studies of the Vendée, thinking about transmission entails blurring the boundaries between the study of events and their retrospective interpretation, creating “un chassé-croisé entre histoire, historiographie et mémoire”.¹⁷ This has often worked most successfully when focussing on a single, highly influential vector of transmission: take

¹² Richard Wrigley, *The Politics of Appearances: Representations of Dress in Revolutionary France* (Oxford; New York : Berg, 2002), 13–57.

¹³ Emmanuel Fureix, ‘L’iconoclasme politique: un combat pour la souveraineté (1814–16)’ in Annie Duprat (ed. *Révolutions et mythes identitaires: Mots, violences, mémoire* (Paris: Nouveau monde, 2009), 173–93.

¹⁴ Tom Stammers, ‘The Homeless Heritage of the French Revolution c.1789–1889’, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 25 (2018), 1–13; see also Stammers, ‘The Bric-à-Brac of the Old Regime: Collecting and Cultural History in Post-Revolutionary France’, *French History*, 22.3 (2008), 295–315.

¹⁵ See Sophie Wahnich (ed.) *Histoire d’un trésor perdu: Transmettre la Révolution française* (Paris: Les Prairies ordinaires, 2013).

¹⁶ Marie-Claude Chaudonneret, ‘Le mythe de la Révolution’ in Philippe Bordes, Régis Michel (eds.), *Aux armes, aux arts! Les arts de la Revolution* (Paris: A. Biro, 1988), 313–40.

¹⁷ Jean-Clément Martin, *Révolution et contre-révolution en France 1789–1989: Les rouages de l’histoire* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 1996).

Charlotte Hould's comprehensive study of the *Tableaux historiques de la Révolution française*, as traced through their multiple editions and continental adaptations, or Anna Karla's investigation on the Barrière and Berville publishing house, from where so many revolutionary memoirs were packaged and disseminated.¹⁸ Another solution has been to choose a single revolutionary episode and follow all of its permutations and re-interpretations, such as the death of Marat.¹⁹ Putting the emphasis on tangible traces of the Revolution can illuminate the 'regimes of value' that shaped the longue durée reception of 1789, as objects transitioned from being militant props to sentimental curios, historical documents or works of art.²⁰ Analogous research on the aftermath of twentieth-century revolutions – such as the phenomenon of Soviet kitsch, or the commodification of Chairman Mao – indicates how rich material culture can be for grasping the nostalgia and affective ironies rife in post-revolutionary societies.²¹

Why did individuals collect the French Revolution? For committed republicans, such as Alfred de Liesville or Marcelin Pellet, gathering traces of this era was a form of political homage. For others, it might represent an investment, as revolutionary memorabilia had been commodified by Patriot Palloy ever since the demolition of the Bastille.²² For scholars of the era, collecting was an essential component of research, and collectors of the Revolution featured among its first historians, starting with Jean-Louis Soulavie.²³ Most interesting, perhaps, are cases of collectors who felt irresistibly drawn towards revolutionary culture, despite their political or aesthetic aversion to its content. Rolf Reichardt and Hubertus Kohle begin *Visualizing the Revolution* with the recollection that in 1797 Goethe, living then in Frankfurt, had briefly considered writing a treatise on caricature, "attracted and repelled by the distorting, even vulgar metaphors of some of the prints in circulation at the time of the

¹⁸ Claudette Hould (ed.), *La Révolution par la gravure: Les Tableaux historiques de la Révolution française, une entreprise éditoriale d'information et sa diffusion en Europe (1791–1817)* (Vizille: Musée de la Révolution française; Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2002); Anna Karla, 'Éditer la Révolution sous la Restauration: La collection "Barrière et Berville"' in Sophie Wahnich (ed.), *Histoire d'un trésor perdu*, 129–48.

¹⁹ Guillaume Mazeau, *Le Bain de l'histoire: Charlotte Corday et l'attentat contre Marat, 1793–2009* (Champ Vallon, Seyssel, 2009).

²⁰ See Frederick Myers (ed.), *The Empire of Things: Regimes of Value and Material Culture* (Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research Press, 2001). For one case study, see Nicola J. Shilliam, '“Cocardes nationales et bonnets rouges”: Symbolic Headdresses of the French Revolution', *Journal of the Museum of Fine-Arts, Boston*, 5 (1993), 104–31.

²¹ Theresa Sabonis-Chafee, 'Communism as Kitsch: Soviet Symbols in Post-Soviet Society' in Adèle Marie Barker (ed.), *Consuming Russia: Popular Culture, Sex and Society since Gorbachev* (Durham, [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 1999) 362–82; Peter Hitchcock, 'Mao to the Market' in Xudong Zhang (ed.), *Whither China? Intellectual Politics in Contemporary China* (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2001), 263–84; Amy Jane Barnes, *Museum Representations of Maoist China: From Cultural Revolution to Commie Kitsch* (London: Routledge, 2016).

²² On Palloy see Colin Jones, 'Bourgeois Revolution Revivified: 1789 and Social Change' in Colin Lucas (ed.) *Rewriting the French Revolution. The Andrew Browning Lectures, 1989* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 157–91.

²³ See Stammers, 'Jean-Louis Soulavie: un collectionneur de l'histoire immédiate' in Gilles Bertrand, Michel Biard, Alain Chevalier, Martial Poirson and Pierre Serna (eds.) *Collectionner la Révolution française* (Paris: Société des études robespierristes, 2016), 81–93.

Directoire, conflicting as they did with traditional ideas of beauty.”²⁴ Although the project was abandoned, the authors stress not just the surprisingly powerful impact of revolutionary imagery upon a writer who otherwise took pride in his Olympian disinterest, but also the odd compound of fascination and disgust that drew him to these thrillingly crude pictures. In this short essay, I want to sketch the portrait of three men who were a generation apart and who each played a critical role in introducing an important corpus of revolutionary material (print, iconography, objects) into major public institutions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Surprisingly, Noël France, Carl De Vinck and Raymond Jeanvrot were all conservatives, and like Goethe, they engaged with the Revolution against their own political instincts. They constitute some of the counter-intuitively counter-revolutionary channels by which the events of the 1790s have passed into our present and the paradoxical history of their reception.

I

François-Noël Thibault was born in Anjou in 1805 into a peasant family. After working on farms and doing military service his happiest distinction came in serving in the garde royale for Charles X. After 1830 he moved into bookselling, despite having little more than primary school education; a ferocious autodidact, he apprenticed under the doyen of rare books, Jacques-Joseph Techener, and in 1838 opened on the place Oratoire du Louvre “une librairie historique et spéciale à la Révolution de 1789” – a first for the period. The proprietor announced that he was a “spécialiste pour les publications, la réunion en tous genres et écrits particuliers sur les cinquante dernières années de notre histoire, époque de controverses sur laquelle on a tant écrit.”²⁵ When the square was destroyed as part of redeveloping the rue de Rivoli, he settled instead at 15 quai Malaquais, moving finally to the quai Voltaire in 1853.²⁶

In his shop Thibault – or ‘Père France’ as he was known, which evolved over time into ‘Noël France’ – stocked a host of minor pamphlets and periodicals, as well as autographs and memoirs by revolutionary personalities, and a very complete run of the *Moniteur*. His rarest pieces were priced very high: in November 1861, he was charging 500 francs for six volumes of the *Bulletin du tribunal révolutionnaire* with a supplement of 135 handwritten pages by Maton de La Varenne covering the 127 journées when the *Bulletin* was suspended. “Sans l’aide de cet exemplaire,” boasted the catalogue, “il est impossible d’avoir le nombre exact des exécutions à Paris.”²⁷ His activity as a bookseller was supplemented by important work as an editor, taking a lead in publishing ten memorable historical titles. These included: *Les Femmes célèbres de 1789 à 1795* by Édouard-Henri Lairtullier; *Recherches historiques et physiologiques sur la guillotine* by Louis Du Bois; *Babeuf et le socialisme en 1796* by Édouard Fleury, the *Œuvres politiques de Charlotte Corday* by Charles Renard and *Le Sang de Marat* by Pierre-Théodore Chéron de Villiers. In 1848 he published his close friend and autograph dealer Jacques Charavay’s *Chansonnier républicain*, a canny way of advertising their combined stock of radical print culture, as well as their ostensible democratic

²⁴ Rolf Reichardt and Hubertus Kohle, *Visualizing the Revolution: Politics and the Pictorial Arts in Late Eighteenth-Century France* (London: Reaktion, 2008), 7.

²⁵ Georges Girard, *La jeunesse d’Anatole France, 1844–1876* (Paris: Gallimard, 1925), 28; Michel Corday, *Anatole France d’après ses confidences et ses souvenirs* (Paris: E. Flammarion), 34.

²⁶ ‘Un Vieux Bibliophile’, ‘La Librairie France’, *Journal des débats*, 10 novembre 1924, 2.

²⁷ Maurice Kahn, *Le père d’Anatole France, Noël France-Thibault (1805–1890): Notes et documents*, (Paris: H. Leclerc, L. Giraud-Badin, 1925), 7–8.

sentiments.²⁸ Further proof of his expertise in this field came in the advice he dispensed to Potier when he was cataloguing the revolutionary collections of Mathieu-Guillaume de Villenave in 1849.²⁹

In various fragments Anatole France, Noël France's better remembered son, described the experience of growing up in this bookish milieu, into which customers with specialist knowledge would enter in search of rarities. "Ce libraire était une vraie bibliographie révolutionnaire," France wrote of his father's establishment on the quai Voltaire. "L'homme de lettres s'asseyait devant lui, sur une chaise de paille, et le feuilletait comme un dictionnaire. Pamphlets, journaux, placards, affiches, tout le curieux musée de 93, il le connaissait, le décrivait." He proceeded to sketch the regulars of the establishment: Guillaume Combrouse, Paul de Saint-Victor, Prosper Duvergier de Hauranne, Paul Lacroix (pseudonym Bibliophile Jacob), the Goncourt brothers, poet Louis de Ronchaud, Pierre-Théodore Chéron de Villiers (the biographer of Charlotte Corday) and the austere anticlerical journalist Alphonse Peyrat.³⁰ France's shop functioned as an informal salon for *amateurs* of the Revolution, drawn specifically by the opportunity to debate and swap stories. It is telling that the Goncourts praised France's bookshop as the last to keep its chairs in Paris ("la dernière boutique où il y avait un peu de causerie et de perte de temps entre les affaires").³¹ In the preface to their 1854 *Histoire de la société française pendant la Révolution* the Goncourts gave fulsome praise to Peyrat, who had placed the entirety of his revolutionary collections at their disposal.³² Another author whose publications were directly inspired by France's merchandise was Charles Brunet, the foremost nineteenth-century historian of Hébert and the revolutionary press.

This interplay between collections and publications was acknowledged in Romantic-era historiography. In the *Histoire de la Révolution française*, Michelet mourned the break-up of the collection of colonel Maurin in the faubourg Saint-Victor "que l'État devrait acquérir".³³ At a time when the Revolution was still poorly represented in many public libraries, such private stockpiles were an undeniable resource. France described his father as "l'obscur et modeste guide de bien des hommes de lettres" although this understated the degree of collaboration between bookseller and clients.³⁴ The most important collaborator was undoubtedly comte Huchet de La Bédoyère, who probably provided the capital that initially allowed France to go into business independently. La Bédoyère had rallied to serve the Bourbons in 1814 and stayed loyal to the dynasty throughout his life, resigning his military

²⁸ They promised to bring out "Chronique scandaleuse des ducs d'Orléans, et autres publications démocratiques." France's willingness to endorse the democratic sentiments of Charavay in 1848 may come from his dislike of the Orléans dynasty after 1830. Jacques Charavay, Noël France (eds.), *Chansonnier républicain 1793–1848, dédié au peuple républicain* (Paris: Charavay, 1848).

²⁹ *Catalogue des principaux livres de la bibliothèque de feu M. Villenave* (Paris: Pourchet aîné, 1848).

³⁰ France 'Un foyer éteint', *Chasseur bibliographe*, 2 (février, 1867), 35–7.

³¹ Edmond and Jules Goncourt, *Journal: Mémoires de la vie littéraire* (ed.) Robert Ricatte, 3 vols (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1989), II, 2 janvier 1867, 62

³² Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Histoire de la société française pendant la révolution* (Paris, Dentu, 1854), iv.

³³ Jules Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, 7 vols (Paris: Chamerot, 1847–53), III, 554.

³⁴ France, 'Le comte Henri de la Bédoyère' in *Bibliophile français*, 4 (1870), V, 262.

command in 1830 rather than break his oath to the Crown. And yet this unimpeachable royalist, and notoriously pernickety bibliophile, avidly gobbled up rival collections of revolutionary material until he owned 100,000 pieces, comprising 6,000 pamphlets, posters and *placards*, 4,000 volumes of *procès-verbaux*, mémoires, almanachs, 2,000 different political newspapers and 80 dossiers of autographs, in addition to 4,000 engravings. The entirety was acquired by the Bibliothèque Nationale in 1864 for a price of 90,000 francs.³⁵ This purchase was facilitated by the thoroughness with which the collection had been catalogued by Noël France, who gave a sympathetic portrait of his friend and the consuming passions that fired him. “Quand l’histoire de la Révolution tient une fois un homme, il ne peut plus s’en détacher, elle le conduit jusqu’au bout, au milieu des événements les plus terribles, des scènes les plus imposantes.”³⁶

It is curious that both France and the comte de La Bédoyère were staunch Legitimists, who reminisced about the tearful farewell of Charles X at Cherbourg.³⁷ This monarchist sentiment fed into a lively culture of relic-collecting. France treasured a scrap of the white flag he had been forced to renounce after the fall of the king in August 1830, and in 1862 was delighted to acquire a letter from the Bourbon pretender the comte de Chambord which he added to his treasury of “reliques royales”.³⁸ In this passion for “fétiches” or “objets-personnes”, to cite sociologist Nathalie Heinich, mundane items were transformed and consecrated by the faith of their owners.³⁹ A similar craving for relics underpinned their attraction to revolutionary material, although here objects acted to focalise feelings of repulsion. The Musée Carnavalet currently possesses a copy of the 1789 constitution bound in human skin (allegedly that of a guillotined aristocrat); this ghoulish volume had once belonged to Villenave, and in 1857 was discretely retailed in France’s shop.⁴⁰ Another rarity among his stock was a bloodstained copy of *L’Ami du Peuple* (dated 13 August 1793) which Marat had used as a writing support on the day of his murder. One annotation on the paper attested it had been presented by Albertine Marat to colonel Maurin in May 1837 to enhance his “collection of patriotic monuments of the period.” A second annotation alleged that when Maurin’s collection was acquired by La Bédoyère, the new owner felt a spasm of disgust and passed it on to Noël France, who in turn handed it to his son Anatole in 1864.⁴¹ In fact, it seems multiple smeared copies of *L’Ami du Peuple* had been fabricated to trap overly-credulous collectors, with one journalist alleging that Albertine Marat deliberately created counterfeits with rabbits’ blood.⁴²

³⁵ Maurice Tourneux, *Bibliographie de l’histoire de Paris pendant la Révolution française*, 5 vols (Paris: Imprimerie nouvelle, 1890), IV, xx–xxiii; Jean-Paul Fontaine, ‘Les somptueuses bibliothèques du comte de La Bédoyère’, *Le Magazine du Bibliophile et de l’amateur de manuscrits & autographes* 77 (Oct, 2008) 17–22.

³⁶ Noël France, ‘Preface’ to *Description historique et bibliographique de la collection de feu M. le comte H. de la Bédoyère sur la Révolution française, l’Empire et la Restauration* (Paris: France, 1862), i–ii.

³⁷ See the veiled autobiography: Anatole France, *Pierre Nozière* (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1899), 97–98.

³⁸ Girard, *La jeunesse*, 21–23.

³⁹ Nathalie Heinich, ‘Les objets-personnes. Fétiches, reliques et œuvres d’art’, *Sociologie de l’art*, 6 (1993), 25–55.

⁴⁰ Jean-Clément Martin, *Un détail inutile? Le dossier des peaux tannées, Vendée, 1794* (Paris: Vendémaire, 2013), 70.

⁴¹ Noël France, ‘Le sang de Marat’ cited in Kahn, *Le père*, 27–28.

⁴² Georges Montorgueil [Octave Lebesgue], ‘Une relique de Marat à la Nationale’, *L’Éclair*, 12 mai 1906.

Yet this genre of artefact – blending a dramatic incident with rarity and macabre corporeality – perfectly answered contemporaries' demands for the Revolution as a palpable presence.

Noël France's career distils some central features of post-revolutionary transmission. The first is the importance of commercial networks, and the expanding market for texts and souvenirs from this period. Thanks to a recent study of the business dealings of Paul Lacroix, a habitu   of France's bookshop, we can appreciate how the sale of revolutionary memorabilia incentivised the production of deliberately sensationalised anecdotes about Jacobin atrocities (such as the tanneries of human skin installed at Meudon).⁴³ The Revolution possessed an addictive gothic allure in the mid nineteenth century: Victor Hugo noted in disbelief the English family who tracked down the old executioner Sanson in 1846 and begged to buy his guillotine blades, or at least strap their angelic daughter into the machine.⁴⁴ Second, in an era before academic professionalisation informal spaces, like shops, clubs and even dining societies, could be real motors of historical inquiry.⁴⁵ No  l France's stock-lists conditioned not just what was researched, but how it was written; one critic has astutely observed that the Goncourts perfected a particular blend of polemical and anecdotal *petite histoire*, nourished on the spoils from their bibliophile excursions across Paris.⁴⁶

Third, the family was a crucial site for initiation into the Revolution, as Sergio Luzzatto has demonstrated the importance of memories transmitted by the Vieux Montagnards.⁴⁷ Adopting a longer chronology suggests that collecting too became an inter-generational affair, spanning the entire nineteenth century.⁴⁸ Even if young Anatole France was an ardent republican, he was profoundly shaped by his father's business. In 1867 he announced a plan for a new encyclopaedia on the French Revolution, devised on positivist principles and set to appear in twelve volumes of 640 pages each. Due to lack of subscriptions the plan fell through, but the list of agreed contributors (including Michelet, Quinet, Peyrat, Charavay, Louis M  nard, Jules Clar  tie and at one stage Louis Blanc) as well as the sheer breadth of topics to be covered (such as manners, museums, festivals, hospitals, coinage and language) testified to the voracious curiosity fostered on the quai Malaquais.⁴⁹ Anatole France ultimately found an

⁴³ Magali Charreire, 'Des ench  res    la fiction: Les collections de la R  volution fran  aise l  gitim  es par un   crivain-bibliophile romantique sous la monarchie de Juillet' in Bertrand, Biard, Chevalier, Serna (eds.), *Collectionner la R  volution fran  aise*, 163–74.

⁴⁴ Victor Hugo, *Choses Vues: Souvenirs, journaux, cahiers 1830-1855* (ed.) Hubert Juin (Paris: Quarto Gallimard, 2002), 255–56.

⁴⁵ For the historical research fostered at the Magny dinner table see Jonathan Dewald, "'   la table de Magny": Nineteenth-Century French Men of Letters and the Sources of Modern Historical Thought', *American Historical Review*, 108.4 (2003), 1009–33.

⁴⁶ Robert Kopp, 'Les Goncourts historiens', *Cahiers Edmond et Jules de Goncourt*, 12 (2005), esp. 15–17.

⁴⁷ Sergio Luzzatto, *M  moire de la Terreur: vieux Montagnards et jeunes r  publicains au XIX   si  cle* (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 1991).

⁴⁸ Consider the famous collection assembled by Alexandre Rousselin de Corbeau, comte de Saint-Albin, passed through his daughter to Achille Jubinal, and then on through their daughter to the Dreyfusard historian of Paul Barras, Georges Duruy (some of whose papers have now entered the Archives Nationales). See Alain Chevalier, 'Collectionner les collectionneurs de la R  volution fran  aise' in Bertrand, Biard, Chevalier, Serna (eds.), *Collectionner la R  volution fran  aise*, 16.

⁴⁹ Anatole France, 'Encyclop  die de la R  volution', *L'Amateur des autographes*, nos. 157–158 (juillet, 1868), 175–8.

outlet for his revolutionary passions not in scholarship but in fiction – the short stories *L'étui de nacre* (1892), and the penetrating novel on the Terror, *Les dieux ont soif* (1912) – and this feedback loop between scholarly and literary treatments of the 1790s was symptomatic of the democratic culture of history under the Third Republic.

II

The bloodstained Marat newspaper was acquired from Anatole France in 1864 by a very different bibliophile family: the De Vincks, father and son. They were Belgian by origin, although they insisted that the Walloon provinces had “demeurées toujours françaises de cœur et d'éducation”.⁵⁰ Born in Brussels in 1823, the elder Eugène had travelled widely as a diplomat, but kept returning to France, where he was privy to observing at first-hand statesmen like Louis-Napoléon. According to his son Carl, it was around 1850 at the cross-roads of the Second Republic that his father became an iconophile:

Une conviction bien arrêtée se faisait jour en lui: ce n'était pas uniquement dans les récits, souvent entachés de partialité, des historiens, mais encore dans les gravures contemporaines, qu'il convenait de rechercher l'exacte physionomie des personnages et des événements, afin de s'initier à la vraie philosophie de l'histoire. Appréciant de la sorte l'intérêt et la portée de cette classe d'estampes, il dirigeait bientôt et concentrait l'effort de ses recherches iconographiques sur la période de l'histoire de la France qui détermina l'évolution de la société moderne: l'époque de la Révolution.⁵¹

It was an opportune moment, as he could benefit from the dispersal of collections held in low esteem. In 1856 he secured several cartons of revolutionary prints (“caricatures rares, introuvables et inconnues à la Bibliothèque de Paris”) in Brussels from the Robyns collection, finding no competitor.⁵² In 1858 in Paris he bought prodigiously at the four mammoth sales organised by the customs official Laterrade (“la plus importante qui fut jamais exposée aux enchères”).⁵³ This was followed by a great spike in prices which was associated by De Vinck with the fashion for Marie-Antoinette propagated by Empress Eugénie and the ardour to find documents concerning her life and times.⁵⁴ The publication in 1877 of the first iconography of Marie-Antoinette, inventorying for collectors the finest and rarest representations of the queen, revealed the depths of De Vinck's devotion to the woman he viewed as “le vrai Roi de France.”⁵⁵ The text also acknowledged that this had become a crowded field in which opulent bibliophiles such as Octave de Béhague, Gustave Mühlbacher and the comte de la Béraudière, drove rare pieces up to “prix fantastiques”.⁵⁶

Eugène de Vinck was born with a “goût héréditaire” for prints and for collecting generally, implanted not just by his father, but also his father's father-in-law, vicomte Louis Spoelberch

⁵⁰ Carl de Vinck, ‘Préface’ in *Un siècle d'histoire de France par l'estampe 1770–1871: Collection de Vinck. Inventaire analytique* 5 vols (Imprimerie nationale, Paris, 1909–), I, v. On the De Vinck family and the wider culture of revolutionary print collectors, see Stammers, ‘Graphiksammler’ in Reichardt (ed.), *Lexikon der Revolutions – Ikonographie in der europäischen Druckgraphik (1789–1889)* (Münster: Rhema, 2017), 149–66.

⁵¹ Carl de Vinck, ‘Préface’, ix.

⁵² Eugène de Vinck-d'Orp, *Le meurtre du 21 janvier 1793* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1877), 155.

⁵³ Eugène de Vinck-d'Orp, ‘Le meurtre’, 156.

⁵⁴ Eugène de Vinck-d'Orp, ‘Le meurtre’, 157–158.

⁵⁵ Eugène de Vinck-d'Orp, *Iconographie de Marie-Antoinette 1770–1793* (Olivier, Brussels, 1878), 7.

⁵⁶ Eugène de Vinck-d'Orp, ‘Iconographie’, 30.

de Lovenjoul, the Belgian bibliophile and Balzac devotee. Carl served as Belgian ambassador in Cairo, Istanbul, Saint-Petersburg and Peking before retiring for health reasons to a home on the Place de l'Étoile. "Un jour loin de Paris est un jour perdu," he liked to assert.⁵⁷ Carl transformed his father's collection from its modest beginnings – around 4,000 satirical prints related to the Revolution – into a far more imposing ensemble, travelling across Europe to find French, German and English prints illustrating episodes of revolutionary history. At the time of the first donation to the Cabinet des Estampes in 1906, it comprised 17,000 pieces and was hailed even then as a "royal" bequest. By the time the first volume was published in 1909, covering the period 1770–1789, this had leapt to 25,000 prints; when the third volume was published in 1921, this had grown to a colossal 29,000 items, thanks to interesting acquisitions related to the Second Empire.⁵⁸ Truly, the collection fully justified its ambition to represent "Un siècle d'histoire de France." A vital influence in persuading Carl de Vinck to leave his family's collection to the Bibliothèque nationale was Georges Lenôtre (the pen name of Louis Léon Théodore Gosselin 1855–1935), the master of *petite-histoire* under the Third Republic, and author of dozens of piquant, though politically reactionary, popular titles, such as the atmospheric *Vieilles maisons, vieux papiers* (six volumes, 1900–1929).⁵⁹

The De Vinck collection at the Bibliothèque Nationale is known by most scholars of eighteenth and nineteenth-century France, but there has been little interrogation of its origins or its rationale. The chronological parameters were fixed around two highly emotive dates: the marriage of the dauphin and the dauphine on 16 May 1770, and the final defeat of the Paris Commune in May 1871. According to Jean Laran, a *conservateur* at the Cabinet des Estampes, baron Carl had inherited the cult for Marie-Antoinette from his father and had now over one hundred portraits which "retracent les traits de l'archiduchesse, de la dauphine, de la jeune reine ou de la condamnée du Temple."⁶⁰ De Vinck disdained merely chronological classification and instead sought to group the prints together by thematic subjects that would preserve the "propre physiognomie" of the ensemble.⁶¹ His collaborator at the Cabinet des Estampes was François-Louis Bruel, whose entries beside each print displayed not just a wealth of knowledge – outlining the political context, technical procedures and relevant symbolism of each entry – but also marshalled the series into an implicit narrative. This narrative has been concealed whenever the prints are consulted in isolation rather than read in succession (a trend normalised by digitization). Yet the arc of the collection hinges on the sufferings of the royal family, culminating in the pathetic sight of Marie-Antoinette in the Conciergerie, "les yeux si tristement expressifs, bouffis par les larmes et l'insomnie", attired in black "à la façon d'une religieuse."⁶² Immediately after scenes of her execution came prints announcing her reburial at Saint-Denis in 1815 and a suite of original portraits which recapitulated each phase of her reign, elevated through a kind of iconographic apotheosis.⁶³

⁵⁷ M.B. 'Les deuils de l'Académie: Carl de Vinck de Deux-Orp: amateur, écrivain d'art (1859–1931)', *Bulletin de l'Académie des Beaux-Arts*, 13 (1931), 37–43; 42.

⁵⁸ François-Louis Bruel, 'Introduction' in *Un siècle d'histoire de France*, I, xxvii; François Courboin, 'Avant-propos' in *Un siècle d'histoire de France*, III, vii.

⁵⁹ Laure Beaumont-Maillet, 'Les collectionneurs au Cabinet des Estampes', *Nouvelles de l'estampe*, 132 (1993), 4–27; 18.

⁶⁰ Jean Laran, 'La collection de Vinck à la Bibliothèque Nationale', *Gazette des beaux-arts*, II (1909), 84–88.

⁶¹ Carl de Vinck, 'Préface', I, xiii.

⁶² Bruel, 'Introduction', xxxv–vi.

⁶³ See *Un siècle d'histoire de France*, III, 402–403.

Lynn Hunt has stressed the way in which 1789 produced a new kind of politicised visual literacy: “People came quite literally to see the world differently, and we have much to gain from examining their ways of seeing.”⁶⁴ This insight can be fruitfully extended forward to think about the long-term reception of revolutionary imagery, the different kinds of scrutiny and affects it provoked. How can we account for the ways in which its ideological enemies looked at revolutionary culture, as well as their strategies for refuting or containing it? What do we learn by reconstructing reactionary ways of seeing, both at the time and subsequently? The De Vincks belong to a lineage that goes back to the first historian of revolutionary caricature, Jacques-Marie Boyer de Nîmes, who was guillotined as a royalist in 1794.⁶⁵ In his pioneering 1877 study of the representation of Louis XVI’s death, tellingly entitled *Le meurtre du 21 janvier 1793*, Eugène de Vinck confessed his sense of wonder at the fertility of the revolutionary imagination:

Aucun temps n’a été aussi fécond en brochures, en pamphlets, en gravures et en caricatures que l’époque de la révolution française: on aurait dit que la prise de la Bastille avait secoué toute la nation, et que, remuée au contact d’un fil électrique, sa verve s’épanouissait subitement. La France, étonnée elle-même de son audace, curieuse de jouir d’une liberté nouvelle, s’était hâtée de se griser de liberté pour arriver presque du premier saut jusqu’à la licence. Telle pièce répandue à cette époque dans les rues par milliers d’exemplaires, vendue alors pour un sol, vaut aujourd’hui plusieurs billets de banque.⁶⁶

Prints and caricatures offered the ideal “thermomètre” for tracking this feverish profusion of subversive thoughts towards what amounted in De Vinck’s eyes to a religious crime. He justified having “accumulé dans ce volume tant d’horreurs” by comparing his iconographical essay to the Expiatory Chapel on the site of the Madeleine cemetery: an enduring monument to an unforgettable sin.⁶⁷ Indeed he believed the consequences of the regicide continued to explain the subsequent ordeal of the French people, condemned to a century of abortive revolutions and national humiliation. In terms strongly reminiscent of Joseph de Maistre, De Vinck insisted that each insurrection – in 1830, in 1848, in 1871 – represented a divine “punition”, “une évocation du spectre de Louis XVI, qui vient rappeler à la nation que Dieu la châtie pour avoir abattu la tête de son roi.” The study of visual culture helped illuminate this hidden providence and reveal how much further France had to travel “pour effacer les taches de sang.”⁶⁸

III.

The sufferings of Louis XVI also sparked the collecting instinct in Raymond Jeanvrot. “Ma première gravure achetée à la foire de Bordeaux, mars 1898, chez l’antiquaire de Rudelle pour la somme de 4 francs, j’étais âgé de treize ans.” This inscription was added to the reverse of an image (technically printed in the Restoration) of Louis XVI in prison instructing

⁶⁴ Lynn Hunt, ‘The Experience of Revolution’, *French Historical Studies* 32.4 (2009), 678. See also Guillaume Mazeau, Pascal Dupuy, Charlotte Guichard, Richard Taws et Pascal Griener, ‘Cultures visuelles et révolutions: enjeux et nouvelles problématiques’, *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 372 (2013), 143–60.

⁶⁵ Annie Duprat, ‘Le regard d’un royaliste sur la Révolution: Jacques-Marie Boyer de Nîmes’, *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 337 (2004), 21–39.

⁶⁶ Eugène de Vinck, *Le meurtre*, 151.

⁶⁷ Eugène de Vinck, *Le meurtre*, 164–66.

⁶⁸ Eugène de Vinck, *Le meurtre*, 171–72.

the dauphin with an atlas, with a poem beneath drawing comparisons with Charles I.⁶⁹ This adolescent purchase marked the beginnings of a collection that returned with ritualistic solemnity to the agonies of the Bourbons. In his diary in 1943, Jeavrot noted that every 21st January he experienced the death of citizen Capet “comme si c’était hier du 100^e anniversaire” and frequently attended the requiem mass at the basilica of Saint-Denis, prostrating himself before the memory of the royal sacrifice. “Ce jour représente pour moi le Vendredi Saint de la Monarchie [...] Les vrais Français ne se consolent jamais d’avoir vu leur pays commettre un crime aussi atroce.” When at Frohsdorf during the anniversary he renewed the comte de Chambord’s own practice of reading aloud from the testament of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette.⁷⁰ In July 1951 he was able to acquire for 27,000 francs a bronze reliquary containing bone and hair of Louis XVI, that had previously been placed on an altar in Nice for the 21st January celebrations. This most happy day “demeurera une date dans ma vie de collectionneur.”⁷¹

The unmarried Jeanvrot was an eccentric figure, whose obsession with the last Bourbons was the dominant passion of his life. He claimed it had begun in childhood and grew up alongside an early interest in his ancestors, the Roubeaus, a Creole family who had relocated to Bordeaux from Guadeloupe. Jacqueline du Pasquier, who has published extracts from Jeanvrot’s notebooks, has emphasised his seeming indifference to the historical disasters of twentieth-century France. The main reference to the world wars in his diary came through a conversation with Madame Davillier in 1955, who alleged that between 1914-18 the relics of Frohsdorf had been sold to a dealer called Mme de Canson, including Drouais’ portrait of the comtesse d’Artois, the baptismal slippers of the infant Chambord and “chose horrible, et à tout jamais impardonnable, la chemise tachée de sang que le bon roi Louis XVI portait le jour de son exécution!!!”⁷² Otherwise the outside world barely impinged on his obsessive hunt for historical souvenirs at reasonable prices, both in his home town of Bordeaux – which had joyfully welcomed back the Bourbons in 1814, a cause for civic pride – but also from dealers and fellow connoisseurs of royalism in Toulouse, Nice, Paris and cities across Europe. He was particularly keen on items sourced from domestic shrines and memorials – “des objets non achetés mais vieillis dans les familles” – and his diaries are a reminder of how extensive this network was even in the mid-twentieth century.⁷³

Jeanvrot did not publish on his favourite topics but his amateur research into the dynasty and their possessions was untiring (the young Henri, comte de Paris, who he met in 1949, christened Jeanvrot his “professeur de petite histoire”).⁷⁴ He devoted his greatest energies to the post-revolutionary heroines the duchesse d’Angoulême (savouring the tragedy of l’orpheline du Temple) and the duchesse de Berry. Yet even as his interests extended to the glitter of the Restoration, he remained fascinated by lives that were haunted by tragedy and failure, whether the murder of the duc de Berry in 1820, or the abortive uprising in the Vendée in 1832. He laboured across his life to get closer to these tragic women, making

⁶⁹ Jacqueline du Pasquier, *Raymond Jeanvrot: Une passion royaliste* (Paris: Somogy, 2007), 56–57.

⁷⁰ Du Pasquier, *Raymond Jeanvrot*, 56.

⁷¹ Du Pasquier, *Raymond Jeanvrot*, 89.

⁷² Du Pasquier, *Raymond Jeanvrot*, 142–43.

⁷³ He was a friend and competitor with Henri Bauquier in Nîmes, who at his death was buried wrapped in the white flag of Chambord (Henri V), and whose collections were also acquired by the ville de Bordeaux. Pasquier, *Raymond Jeanvrot*, 44.

⁷⁴ Du Pasquier, *Raymond Jeanvrot*, 61.

“pilgrimages” to the places they lived, covering the walls of his modest apartment on the rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau with their likenesses, even persuading the Italian owners of the château of Brunsee to let him sleep in the duchesse de Berry’s bed, in exchange for regaling them with his fund of anecdotes about her.⁷⁵ Mario Praz, no stranger to the peculiarities of collecting, visited in 1961 and noted how Jeanvrot lived and slept in the midst of this giant reliquarium, his bed surrounded by the bracelet of Marie-Amélie, the will of Marie-Antoinette printed on silk, and a piece of velvet from the comte de Chambord’s throne [fig.1]. In the middle, covered in dust, “deux ou trois horloges de bronze doré sans cadran, comme si elles indiquaient presque qu’on était ici hors du temps.”⁷⁶



Fig.1 ‘Raymond Jeanvrot chez lui’, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Bordeaux

In 1958 Jeanvrot sold 16,000 objects to the ville de Bordeaux in exchange for a lifetime annuity, and then in 1966 at his death he bequeathed another 1800 pieces, at which point the entirety passed to the Musée des Arts Décoratifs.⁷⁷ As might be expected, his motives did not arise from public philanthropy, so much as a desire to protect his objects from dealers who

⁷⁵ Du Pasquier, Génèviève Rapaport, ‘Raymond Jeanvrot (1886–1966)’ in *Fleurs de lys et bonnet phrygien: Raymond Jeanvrot et Jacques Calvet. Deux collectionneurs bordelais regardant la Révolution française* (Bordeaux: Association des conservateurs des musées d’Aquitaine, 1990), 16.

⁷⁶ Mario Praz, [1988], ‘Dix mille Bourbons’ in *Le monde que j’ai vu*, (Paris: Julliard, 1993) 355, translated by Jacques Michaut-Paternò from ‘Diecimila Borboni’ in *Il mondo che ho visto*, 1982,

⁷⁷ Du Pasquier, Rapaport, ‘Raymond Jeanvrot’, 13.

would swoop and dismember the ensemble after his death (“combien je suis heureux de les voir sauvés,” he noted in 1951). Donation to a museum was a desirable strategy for keeping cherished treasures out of “de mains profanes, d’acheteurs vulgaires ou de marchands de cochons américains.”⁷⁸ Similar sentiments motivated De Vinck when bequeathing his prints to the Bibliothèque Nationale, originally intending that they should form a reserve collection, preserved from the gaze of random visitors (“indifférents”) and only communicated to trusted, sensitive scholars: “leur main légère ne feuillettera pas sans quelque émotion ces images fragiles, témoins des plus mémorables événements de l’Histoire de la France.”⁷⁹ The

Jeanvrot collections spanned a variety of media, from engravings to miniatures, fans, snuff-boxes, medals, ceramics, fabrics. Du Pasquier has noted that the iconography was “répétitive dans l’expression de sa douleur et de ses regrets, mais infiniment variée dans ses représentations.”⁸⁰ Indeed, Jeanvrot documented how the tragic scenes of royal imprisonment and execution were reinterpreted not just by printers and artists across Europe but also subsequently under the Restoration and the Second Empire, curating his own gallery of post-revolutionary receptions. He was especially fascinated by the cryptic motifs and clandestine circulation of royalist artifacts, such as the “mysterious urn” formed out of hair in one miniature, or the profile of Louis XVI formed by the shadows of a wooden baluster.⁸¹ Rehabilitating these things reinforced Jeanvrot’s sense of belonging to an exclusive coterie of fidèles and true believers, caught between mourning the past and hoping against hope for a spectral royal return.

The three collectors profiled here were significant mediators or “passeurs” of the French Revolution, despite their antipathy towards it.⁸² Through their donations they translated their private fascination into a public resource, constituting a *fonds* that many scholars today still use (without much interrogation). It might seem that their macabre fascination with revolutionary relics belongs to an unscholarly past, were it not that objects kept in family shrines still surface in museum displays: in 1995 the Musée d’art et d’histoire in Cholet exhibited the skull of Vendéen general Jean-Nicolas Stofflet, executed in 1796, acquired from the descendants of the medic who probably took the specimen out of Angers hospital in 1803.⁸³ Disdained by academic history, the anecdotal, lachrymose strand of *petite histoire* continues to inform the representation and consumption of the Revolution within modern popular culture. The turn towards the history of emotions encourages us to take affects seriously, not simply those of the revolutionary actors, but also those of the Revolution’s retrospective commentators and custodians of all political persuasions. Du Pasquier underlines the ambivalence of Jeanvrot’s relationship to the Revolution, an event “qui lui semblait particulièrement odieux, mais qui aussi par la violence de l’émotion qu’il suscita en lui, orienta sa vie et lui donna, en définitive, ses plus grandes joies.”⁸⁴ The voyeurism,

⁷⁸ Du Pasquier, *Raymond Jeanvrot*, 69.

⁷⁹ Carl de Vinck, ‘Préface’, xv.

⁸⁰ Du Pasquier, Rapaport, ‘Raymond Jeanvrot’, 17.

⁸¹ Du Pasquier, *Petite guide de la collection Jeanvrot* (Bordeaux: Musée des arts décoratifs, 1990), 7-8. On this genre see Taws, ‘Trompe l’Œil and Trauma: Money and Memory after the French Revolution’, *Oxford Art Journal* 30.3 (2007), 353–76.

⁸² Michel Biard, Jean-Numa Ducange (eds.), *Passeurs de révolution* (Paris: Société des études robespierristes, 2013).

⁸³ Bernard Fauchille, Florent Cirodde, Cédric Pannevel (eds.), ‘Collections – acquisitions 1993–2007’ in *Musée d’art et d’histoire de Cholet*, exh. cat. (Ville de Cholet, 2007), 56.

⁸⁴ Du Pasquier, Rapaport, ‘Raymond Jeanvrot’, 18.

nostalgia, fetishism, fear and pity recorded by these men were symptomatic of what made 1789 truly revolutionary. A *longue durée* history of reception would unveil an archaeology of previous ways of apprehending those momentous events – and in turn asks us to be more candid and reflexive about our own affective investments in the topic.

Due to the durability of revolutionary culture, an ‘object biography’ approach reveals how pieces of the past flowed into our present (and were transformed along the way). Reconstructing the origins and odysseys of our sources – even partly disguised in bodies like the Bibliothèque Nationale or the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Bordeaux – teaches us to remember the inheritance of previous agendas and the filters that condition our research horizons. The work of these mediators unsettles conventional chronological boundaries and cuts against the familiar demarcations of ‘guerres de mémoire’. As Emmanuel Fureix has shrewdly observed, “l’histoire sensible de la mémoire révolutionnaire permet-elle de repérer les écarts entre les courants de l’historiographie, aisément repérables, et des usages sociaux qui défient les lignes de démarcation usuelles en histoire politique.”⁸⁵ His most recent intervention, *L’œil blessé*, reveals how political activists of all stripes – from Legitimist to Republican – found the signs of their opponents intolerable, inaugurating a round of purges and purifications of public space that pushed the iconoclasm of the Jacobins deep into the nineteenth century. Understanding this post-revolutionary dynamic is essential to appreciate the twin forces of conservation and erasure that have shaped the modern archive.⁸⁶

In accounting for the conservative attraction towards the sanguinary traces of the Revolution, Noël France in 1862 diagnosed a peculiar psychological compulsion: “Quand on a jété les yeux sur ces faits prodigieux... on ne les détourne pas facilement.”⁸⁷ By considering how the Revolution appeared to those who despised it, but who found themselves unable to look away, we can better appreciate why it insinuated itself in the collective imagination as an unavoidable frame of reference. As late as 1966, one book on *Les Collectionneurs* ridiculed the stock-character of the amateur who “a consacré sa fortune et sa vie à réunir des souvenirs révolutionnaires par horreur de cette époque.” For him, the accumulation of materials was addictive – busts of Marie-Antoinette, the waistcoat of Fabre d’Églantine and the corset of Théroigne de Méricourt, until his walls were papered in caricatures, pikes were propped up in the umbrella stand, stacks of the Père Duchêne filled up the fireplace – until the collection consumed his home: “il n’est plus le maître, qui l’étouffe, le chasse de chez lui.”⁸⁸ Contra Furet, the hypnotic appeal 1789 exerted over two centuries cannot be reduced to a purely discursive trick; rather, it owed much to the intimate channels through which its legends and residues were transmitted, the way its words and images got under one’s skin. One challenge for cultural historians today is to understand diachronically this complex, sometimes perverse, process of identification and internalisation.

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⁸⁵ Emmanuel Fureix, ‘Une transmission discontinue. Présences sensibles de la Révolution française, de la Restauration aux années 1830’ in Wahnich (ed.), *Histoire d’un trésor*, 193.

⁸⁶ Emmanuel Fureix, *L’œil blessé: politiques de l’iconoclasme après la Révolution française* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2019).

⁸⁷ Noël France, ‘Préface’, ii.

⁸⁸ Philippe Jullian, *Les collectionneurs* (Paris: Flammarion, 1966), 55–56.

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